

# Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,

## Session 8: Matthew--Kingdom

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Hey everyone, welcome back. You guys have been diving deep into the gospel of Matthew, and today we are going to help you extract some really Fascinating insights about one of its central themes: the kingdom of God. Yeah, you're ready for some serious aha moments. All right, we've got excerpts today from a lecture series on New Testament literature by Dr. Dave Mathewson, and we're on a mission to uncover what Matthew reveals about Jesus's radical message of the kingdom. Okay, and how it completely flips the script on traditional Jewish understanding. You know, it's fascinating that the kingdom of God is this idea that just kind of weaves its way through the whole New Testament. But yeah, Matthew's take on it is particularly unique; you know, he's deeply rooted in the Old Testament and sees Jesus as fulfilling those ancient promises in a way that no one could have predicted.

Okay, let's unpack this a little bit, I think, before we even get to the how; we need to define the what. Sure, what does the kingdom of God even mean? Because I have a feeling it's not about harps and clouds, right? You're absolutely right. It's not about a physical place or some far-off future. The kingdom of God is about God's dynamic reign and rule. Okay, it's his power actively at work in the lives of people, and the key here is that it's both present and future. So it's like God is King, but not in the way we usually think of Kings with castles and armies. Exactly, think of it more like an invisible kingdom that's breaking into our world, changing hearts, transforming lives. Right, and to really grasp this, I think we need to rewind a bit and look at the backstory. We mean the Old Testament. Yeah, you're saying there are clues about God's kingdom kind of hidden throughout those ancient stories. Absolutely.

The Old Testament is like a treasure map pointing us toward the reality of God's kingdom. Okay, think about it in Genesis. We see God's original plan for humanity to rule as his image bearers, reflecting his reign over creation, right? It was like God was setting up a kingdom on earth with humans as his vice regents, right? God gives Adam and Eve this incredible responsibility to care for creation and reflect his character. Yeah, but then, well, things kind of went sideways, didn't they? Sin entered the picture, and humanity's role in God's reign got complicated that's putting it mildly but here's the thing: even when humanity messed up, God didn't give up on his plan. He made this incredible promise to King David, establishing a dynasty, a line of kings that would last the Davidic Covenant forever.

It's like God was hinting that one day a descendant of David would come along and set things right? Yes, a Messiah who would restore humanity's place in God's kingdom, exactly, but then centuries pass; Israel goes into exile, the Davidic King is gone, and the prophets are lamenting, right, longing for God to restore his people and make things right again. So by the time we get to the first century the Jewish people are living under Roman oppression waiting hoping for God to intervene So imagine you're a first century Jew living under Roman rule longing for liberation Yeah, then Jesus shows up proclaiming repent for the kingdom of God is at hand what goes through your mind most likely you'd envision a military leader a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish an earthly kingdom Okay, I mean that's what everyone was expecting the fulfillment of God's promises in one

dramatic earth-shattering event But Jesus well, he throws a curveball wait, so he doesn't come in with swords blazing ready to conquer right then He does offer the kingdom but not in the way everyone expected instead of a one-time event he presents it as a two-part act It's like God's kingdom is arriving in installments to installments. I'm intrigued Tell me more about this two-part arrival think of it like this Jesus's life death and resurrection are the grand opening of the kingdom It's the announcement that God's reign has officially broken into the world The curtain has been pulled back and we get a glimpse of what God's rule truly looks like But at the same time this present evil age continues We still see suffering injustice brokenness all around us the full manifestation of the kingdom the complete eradication of evil and the establishment Of God's perfect wane that awaits Jesus's return So it's like God's kingdom is one foot in the present and one foot in the future We're living in this in-between time this messy middle ground Exactly scholars often call this the already but not yet concept of the kingdom Okay, and this is where things get really interesting you see this already but not yet dynamic has huge implications For how we understand the Christian life.

Okay. I'm seeing where you're going with this. So, how does this idea that God's kingdom is already here, but not fully here, change things for the people of God? Yeah, what does it mean for them and for us? Well, for Matthew's audience, a lot of whom were Jewish Christians wrestling with their identity amidst conflict with other Jews, okay, this was a game-changer.

It meant that belonging to God's people was no longer about ethnicity or perfectly following the law So it wasn't about being born Jewish or meticulously observing all the rituals, right instead It became about responding to Jesus the true King who's already reigning Okay This radical shift blew the doors wide open for everyone Jew and Gentile alike and that's a concept Matthew is really passionate about That is a radical idea So, how does Matthew show this clash between Expectations and the reality of Jesus's kingdom What are some of the ways he highlights this idea that God's reign is breaking through and unexpected ways Well Matthew uses a lot of storytelling to drive this point home Okay, you see it in the parables that are unique to his gospel like the parable of the weeds among the wheat Oh, yeah, the one where a farmer sows good seed, but an enemy comes and sows weeds among the wheat, right? It's a pretty wild story. What's the connection to the kingdom? Yeah, that parable is a powerful illustration of this already, but not yet reality. Okay, the wheat represents the people of God, those who have responded to Jesus and are part of his kingdom. The weeds represent evil and those who oppose God's reign, and just like in the parable, we see both good and evil present in the world right now. So it's not about creating a perfect society here on earth before Jesus returns. Exactly, that's where a lot of people get tripped up. They think the kingdom is about establishing some sort of utopia, you know, a perfect world without any problems, right? But that's not the message of Matthew's gospel. So then what is the message if we can't eradicate all the weeds right now? Then what does it mean to live as kingdom people in this already but not yet reality? It's about embodying the values of God's kingdom even in the midst of imperfection.

Okay, think about it: Jesus healed the sick, welcomed the outcast, and challenged the powerful. He was demonstrating what God's reign looks like in action, and he wasn't waiting for the world to be perfect before he started doing those things. He was bringing the reality of God's kingdom into the here and now precisely, and that's the challenge for us today. We

can get so caught up in the not-yet aspects of the kingdom, so focused on what's wrong with the world, that we forget to participate in what God is already doing, right? It makes me think about those times when I've prayed for healing, you know, for myself or for someone else, and haven't seen the answer I expected. It's easy to get discouraged, to wonder if God is really at work, but this Already, but not yet concept helps me hold on to hope. It reminds me that the full realization of God's kingdom hasn't arrived yet, but it's coming, and in the meantime, I can still be an agent of healing and restoration even in small ways. That's beautifully put. It's not about achieving some Impossible standard of moral perfection. We don't have to have it all figured out. We're all just stumbling along in this messy middle, but we can surrender to God's reign in our lives, allowing his power to work through us.

So it's not about earning our way into the kingdom by being good enough. It's about recognizing that the kingdom is already here, already at work, yes, and aligning ourselves with what God is doing. But what does that look like practically? Give me some concrete examples. How can we live as kingdom people in this in-between time? Well, it starts with those simple everyday acts of love and kindness Okay, it's about seeking justice showing compassion extending grace, even when it's hard It's about building bridges instead of walls speaking truth with love and offering hope to those who are hurting It's about those seemingly small things that actually make a huge difference Like choosing to forgive someone who has wronged you or standing up for someone who is being treated unfairly exactly It's about choosing to live as if God is already King even in the places where it doesn't seem like it Remember the kingdom is like a seed that's been planted. Yeah, it's growing.

It's spreading, but it's not fully mature yet. So we're like gardeners, tending to the soil, watering the seed, nurturing its growth. Yeah, we may not see the full harvest in this lifetime, but we trust that God is bringing it to fruition. That's a great analogy, and Here's the beautiful thing: as we participate in the advance of God's kingdom, even in small ways, we start to see glimpses of its reality breaking through. Yeah, we see healing reconciliation beauty emerging from brokenness It's like we get these little previews of what's to come Yes tastes of heaven on earth and those glimpses should fuel our hope and inspire us to keep going even when it's hard Remember Matthew is writing to a community that's facing persecution and hardship They need to be reminded that even in the midst of suffering God's kingdom is still advancing His reign is still breaking through That's a powerful reminder for us today, too We live in a world where it's easy to get discouraged to feel overwhelmed by all the darkness But Matthew's gospel calls us to lift our eyes to see the glimpses of light to trust that God is at work Even when we can't see the whole picture and to participate in that work, however, imperfectly we do it It's not about being perfect It's about showing up being willing to be used by God to be his hands and feet in the world This has been so insightful before we wrap up I want to make sure our listeners walk away with the key takeaways from Matthew's portrayal of the kingdom Can you give us a quick recap? Absolutely first remember that the kingdom of God is about God's active reign and rule not a physical place Second Jesus fulfills the Old Testament promises, but in a surprising way presenting the arrival of God's kingdom in two stages The first stage has already begun with his life death and resurrection but the full arrival of the kingdom happens later when he returns and Third this has radical implications for who belongs to God's people It's all about allegiance to Jesus the king who's already reigning Those are such important truths to

remember and they really challenge our assumptions about what it means to follow Jesus Yeah, it's not about escaping this world or waiting for some future utopia It's about bringing the reality of God's kingdom into the here and now and it's a journey we're on together We're all in this messy middle this already but not yet space where we experience Both the beauty and the brokenness of the world Yeah But we have the incredible privilege of participating in God's work of redemption of bringing his reign into every corner of our lives So if we connect this to the bigger picture to our own lives What are some already but not yet tensions that we experience and how does this understanding of the kingdom offer us? Hope and challenge. Well, I think about how we long for peace and justice in our world You know, we see glimpses of it moments of reconciliation and progress But then we also see so much conflict and violence and oppression Yeah, that tension between what is and what we hope for that feels like a very real Already, but not yet struggle it is isn't it? And for me, it's often that personal longing for complete wholeness. You know, both physically and emotionally, I've experienced moments of healing and restoration in my own life, and I believe in God's power to bring about complete healing, right? But I also live with chronic pain and the reality that Full healing may not come in this lifetime. Holding those two realities together can be tough sometimes.

Yeah, that's so real. It reminds me of those times when I've prayed for a loved one who was going through a difficult time, and it felt like God was silent. That's not yet part of the equation, and that can be so hard to grapple with when you're in the middle of suffering. Absolutely. Yeah, but this understanding of the kingdom, this two-stage arrival of God's reign, gives us a framework for understanding that tension. Yeah, it reminds us that God is still on the throne. He hasn't abandoned us.

Even when we don't see immediate answers to our prayers. We can trust that he's at work behind the scenes. So it's not about denying the reality of pain or pretending that everything is fine. It's about holding on to hope, knowing that God's kingdom is breaking through even if it doesn't look the way we expect. It's about living in that messy middle with a posture of faith and trust. It's about saying God I believe you're at work.

Even when I don't understand. I trust that your kingdom is coming, even if it's not fully here yet, and in the meantime, we keep doing what we can to be agents of that kingdom. Yes, we keep seeking justice, showing compassion, offering hope wherever we can. What's fascinating is that each of us has a unique part to play in this grand story of redemption, right? You might be called to advocate for those who are marginalized, to create art that reflects beauty and truth, to build bridges of understanding. In your community, the possibilities are truly endless, and it's not about doing it perfectly. It's about showing up, being willing to be used by God even in our imperfection and weakness. I love that you bring that up because it's a powerful reminder for us all. We're not in this alone. We have the holy spirit empowering us guiding us and strengthening us for the journey So to sum it all up the kingdom of god isn't just some abstract theological concept It's a dynamic reality that's breaking into our world right now We see it in those moments of beauty and goodness and acts of love and compassion in the pursuit of justice and peace And we're invited to be part of it to be agents of god's reign in the here and now What an incredible privilege right to partner with god in the restoration of all things It's a daunting task, but also an incredibly exciting one.

So as you continue to explore Matthew's Gospel, I want to leave you with this challenge: Pay attention to the ways god has invited you to participate in his kingdom work. Look for those glimpses of his reign breaking through in your own life and in the world around you, and don't be afraid to step into the messy middle to embrace the tension of the already but not yet. Because that's where the real adventure lies. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. We'll see you next time.